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ABSTRACT

A description is given of Oregon's first and only program to prepare Japanese language teachers for state certification. The program was designed through collaboration by three integral groups: departments within the University, neighboring school districts, and members of the Japanese and business community. The new program, designed to meet the growing demand for Japanese language teachers, inspired the development of model curricula, teaching resources, and innovative events for teachers and students, including a cultural and language immersion day for high school students, a videotape featuring high school teachers using a variety of instructional methods, summer workshops for teachers, a pilot elementary Japanese program, and a developing materials center. (JD)

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Designing Oregon's Certification Program for Japanese: The University, School Districts, and Community Working Together

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Designing Oregon's Certification Program for Japanese: The University, School Districts, and Community Working Together

Oregon's first and only program to prepare Japanese language teachers for state certification was designed through collaboration of three integral groups: departments within the University, neighboring school districts, and members of the Japanese and business community. The new program, designed to meet the growing demand for Japanese language teachers, inspired the development of model curricula and teaching resources in the state of Oregon and innovative events for teachers and students. Included were a cultural and language immersion day for high school students, a videotape featuring high school teachers using a variety of instructional methods, summer workshops for teachers, a pilot elementary Japanese program, and a developing materials center.

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DESIGNING OREGON'S CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR JAPANESE: THE UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER

Oregon's first and only program to prepare Japanese language teachers for state certification was designed through a collaborative effort. Three groups were integral to this planning process: departments within Pacific University, neighboring school districts, and members of the Japanese and business community. The new program, designed to meet the growing demand for Japanese language teachers, inspired the development of model curricula and teaching resources in the state of Oregon and innovative events for teachers and students.

Oregon's certificate program for Japanese language was developed in response to the rapidly increasing enrollment of high school students in Japanese language classes. Second only to Hawaii in the number of programs, the spiraling interest in Japanese has swelled numbers so that Japanese is now the fourth most enrolled foreign language in the state, according to David Arlington, State Department Foreign Languages Specialist. During the fall of 1988, 1,687 students enrolled in Oregon public school classes, a 108% increase in just three years and 112 times greater than the first class of 15 in 1980. (1)

While the demand for Japanese language teachers paralleled this growth, the state had no certification program; and school administrators experienced difficulty hiring qualified teachers. Native speakers of Japanese, while proficient in language, generally lacked preparation in teaching methods and classroom management/organization. Certified teachers with some background and interest in Japanese sought help in strengthening their language skills, designing curricula, and supplementing their background in the literature, structure, and culture of Japanese.

Located twenty five miles west of Portland, Oregon, Pacific University in Forest Grove provides an ideal setting for training teachers of Japanese. A private liberal arts college with a history of collaboration with institutions in Japan, it is also the home of the English Language Institute, which specializes in teaching English to foreign students. Greater than half of the enrolled students are Japanese and often assist in classes and provide their American counterparts with opportunities to practice language skills. In addition, the University is situated near Oregon's Sunset Corridor, an area intensely impacted by the Pacific Rim through its numerous Japanese electronics companies, including Fujitsu, NEC, and Epson.

Pacific University's response to the need for Japanese language teachers was the Asian Languages Project, a partnership between University departments, school districts, and the community. This form of "symbiotic partnership" for solving common problems through mutually beneficial arrangements has been described by Kenneth Sirotnik and John Goodland as effective--and novel--in effecting educational improvement. (2)

Conceived during the Fall of 1986 by two departments of the University, the Asian Languages Project initially brought together the expertise of faculty members in Education and Foreign Languages. An expanded partnership with school districts was insured by the endorsement of superintendents and personnel directors from neighboring school districts. Local teachers of Japanese in these districts agreed to serve on an advisory board to guide planning and share resources. The awarding of two consecutive Title II grants (Education for Economic Security Act) in 1986 and 1987 provided the initial funding base for the project.

The Asian Languages Advisory Group became the focal point for meshing University and public school ideas. Composed of eight Japanese language teachers in the greater Portland area, the group met regularly with University faculty to advise development of the teaching program and guide project activities. Teachers provided information about the current status and size of their programs, describing procedures and materials they were using. They assessed their own needs, raising key curriculum issues, e.g., "When should instruction in writing begin?" "Should conversation and writing be separate?" Teachers also addressed the question, "What should be included in the training of every Japanese language teacher?" and discussed the role the University could play in assisting public schools. From these meetings, innovative program ideas were generated.

Also valuable in the design of the program were consultant visits during the Spring of 1987 from two Japanese language specialists, each from Hawaii, the state with the longest standing and largest public school programs for Japanese. Dr. John Wollstein from the Hawaii Department of Education and Dr. David Ashworth from the University of Hawaii shared expertise in the new technology of video-telephone exchanges, computer programs, and comprehension-based language instruction. In addition, they conducted seminars, met with district administrators, reviewed resources, and made program recommendations.

The extensive program approval process, which spanned two years, required endorsements from the University, outside reviewers, and the state accrediting body. On campus, the Japanese teaching program was reviewed and approved by the Foreign Languages and Education Departments, the Humanities and Education Divisions, the University curriculum committee, and the Educational Consortium, an advisory body of twelve educators. Four off-campus reviewers, including the State Department's Foreign Languages Specialist, also critiqued the program regarding its feasibility for preparing Japanese language teachers. The final step was presentation of the proposed Japanese language program to the state's seventeen-member Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), the body empowered to certify teachers and to review and approve Oregon's teacher education programs. Among items included in the proposal were: justification of need; evidence of institutional capability for carrying out the program; steps for formulating, developing, evaluating, and renewing the program; and course syllabi. Pacific's Japanese teaching program, unique in the state, was approved on April 1, 1988 and will be reviewed in 1992 through an on-site visit.

Pacific University's Japanese language endorsement was modeled after other language endorsement programs, which, in addition to required professional education courses, include twelve semester hours of Japanese language study, a semester of overseas study, a Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages course, and twelve hours of a secondary language. Due to the uniqueness of the language and culture of Japan, the course "Teaching Japanese," which emphasizes the incorporation of culture in language teaching, was added, as well as "Sociolinguistics of Japanese" and "The Structure of Japanese" (advanced grammer course).

Overseas study is one of the unique features of Pacific University's foreign language endorsements. Immersion in the target language culture is critical for students in order to develop fluency and first-hand exposure to the culture. Immersion is particularly crucial in the case of Japanese language because of the great difference in Japan's cultural values and behaviors. Students do not pay extra tuition to participate in the study abroad program, because Pacific University and Kansai Gaidai, our affiliated university in Japan, have arranged mutual tuition payment. Morever, students can transfer their financial aid programs during their study at Kansai Gaidai. All credits received at the affiliated schools are transferable; therefore, students lose no credits earned overseas.

Native speakers of Japanese may be exempt from the study abroad requirements if they can achieve a score of 55 on the ETS Japanese Proficiency Examination. This level of achievement was selected after a pilot test was given to third year Japanese students. Those who want the waiver must also demonstrate proficiency by submitting a writing sample and passing an oral proficiency exmination given by the instructor. The requirement of twelve credits for secondary language(s) is common to all other language endorsement programs at Pacific. However, it has been dropped for those who enter the endorsement program with a previously earned B.A. degree.

Through its goal of developing an endorsement program, the Asian Languages Project inspired other outcomes which enhanced professional development for teachers and language learning for students. The most popular event is Japanese Day, which has been held annually for the past three years. Japanese Day is an immersion day for 140 students studying Japanese at seven high schools.

Planning for Japanese Day involves cooperation with advisory group members who often bring lively, creative, and constructive ideas. Other important groups include: members of the Japanese community who contribute special skills; the Consulate-General of Japan, which donates student awards; the Portland Japanese School, which provides equipment; and lastly the Japanese students studying English at Pacific University's English Language Institute, who serve as leaders during Japanese Day.

On Japanese Day, high school students spend a day with Japanese students on campus, participating in activities that introduce Japanese culture. Activities vary each year and include origami (Japanese traditional paper folding), Japanese Trivial Pursuit, kimono fashion show, Japanese cooking, bon odori (dancing), Japanese scavenger hunts, video telephone conversations with students of Japanese in Hawaii, Undokai (Japanese field day), Japanese skits, and puppet shows. Thus students of Japanese in the Portland area have a one day Japanese immersion experience.

One of the highlights in the school life of students in Japan, Undokai, includes activities such as calisthenics, three-legged relay, tug-of-war, tama-ire (throwing small balls in a basket), and tama-hakobi (carrying a tennis ball on a racquet and kicking a soccer ball at the same time). All participants are divided into two competing groups -- the red and white teams. This activity emphasizes group competition, one of the basic cultural values for the Japanese people, rather than individual competition. Undokai at Pacific also creates enthusiasm and group cohesion among participating high school students.

Another major outcome of the Asian Languages Project is a videotape for teaching methods. The seven advisory group teachers shared their teaching techniques when they were videotaped in their classrooms. The tape, a product of the enthusiasm and teamwork among University faculty and high school teachers, will assist future teachers of Japanese as they study different styles of teaching.

The Asian Languages Project has attempted to provide high school teachers with continuing opportunities for professional development. With its Title II funding, Pacific was able to sponsor special seminars and a series of low-cost summer workshops taught by outstanding Japanese language specialists of national reputation. The workshops were designed to familiarize teachers with the materials and faculty expertise available on campus. The workshops also acquainted teachers with the cultural and linguistic resources available in the community. Each workshop had a theme which sought to give it metaphorical coherence and to bind together the instruction of language and culture as a whole, illustrating our belief that language and culture are inseparable components in any solid foreign language curriculum. Each workshop ran for four days and conferred one semester unit of graduate credit.

During the summer of 1987 Pacific hosted "Ki and Learning," a workshop which examined the Japanese philosophical concept of Ki, "spirit, feeling, air, balance, and serenity," in its various applications to the pedagogical process. Each day began with a half-hour session on aikido taught by the Oregon Ki Society. Participants learned both the physical exercises and the ways in which the practice of ki can bring energy to the classroom. Dr. David Ashworth of the University of Hawaii then conducted the morning portions of the workshop, entitled "Strategies for Teaching Japanese Language." In the afternoons, Professor Kazuko Ikeda delivered a mini-course on Japanese culture, "Images of Japan." Invited speakers from the community completed the day with practical, hands-on sessions on Japanese calligraphy, ikebana (the art of flower arrangement), and Japanese tea ceremony.

Participants ate lunch with visiting Japanese students from Hiroshima Jogakuin University and had the opportunity to practice their own Japanese language skills at that time.

The summer workshop of 1988, "Ba: Styles of Communication for Different Circumstances," focused, in part, on the confrontation of cultural values in business transactions. It was planned and carried out with the generous assistance of the Washington County Business-Education Compact, an organization of some 80 business and educational leaders living and working in Washington County and sharing an interest in Asian languages and cultures. Dr. Noriko Akatsuka from UCLA came to Pacific to lead the sessions on teaching methodology. Project directors recruited a "class" of five high school students with whom Dr. Akatsuka was able to demonstrate the teaching of hiragana (Japanese characters) via a highly successful association method. (3) She also introduced participants to her special curriculum for teaching communication skills through skits. Afternoon sessions dealt with communication in business settings: the language of the market place, the language of diplomacy, business and cultural exchanges and how the Japanese businessman views the North American learner of his language. Professor Ikeda concluded each day by placing the cultural content of each session in context. A special feature of this workshop was the opportunity for teachers to receive individual counseling from Dr. Barbara Mitchell, Certification Officer for TSPC, regarding their progress toward certification.

The success of these summer workshops is apparent in the enthusiastic comments participants wrote on their evaluation forms and in the continuous support they have given to project initiatives. Dr. Akatsuka, in a letter to project directors, also praised the progam. "I thought I went to 'teach,' but, in fact I came back learning a lot of new things about language teaching and intercultural communication. I am quite sure that what I have experienced and learned through the conference will enrich my future teaching as well as my personal life."

Another experiment of the Asian Languages Project is a pilot program for teaching Japanese in the elementary school, undertaken in cooperation with the Reedville Elementary School and David Gillespie, Superintendent of the Reedville School District. The class was offered twice a week for one hour in the afternoon, after regular school hours. Enrollment was limited to fifteen sixth graders. Wendy Tuffli, a Pacific University senior majoring in Japanese, had spent her junior year on an exchange program in Japan and served as the instructor. Her salary was paid jointly by the University and the school district.

Pacific University uses Total Physical Response, a form of right-brain directed instruction involving games, props, and physical activity to associate language fragments with kinetic response and trigger long-term memory retention. This methodology is particularly well-suited for teaching a second language to children. Wendy had both studied Japanese in this way herself, and, in preparation for her appointment, had taken a class in foreign language methodology. In conducting her class, she followed a curriculum guide written by Professor Ikeda. (4)

A final objective of the Asian Languages Project was the creation of a Materials Center to serve both University faculty and area high school teachers. Two Title II grants, in addition to grants received from the Japan Foundation and other sources, have generated more than $15,000 for the acquisition of books, videos, and curriculum guides in Asian Studies and the teaching of Asian languages.

The Asian Languages program at Pacific University has experienced phenomenal growth in Japanese and the genesis of a twin program in Chinese (Mandarin). Enrollment in Japanese language classes has increased 577% over the past five years (from 18 students in 1984 to 104 in 1989). Japanese is now the second most-enrolled language in the Department of Foreign Languages. Programmatic growth and the innovative aspects of the Asian Languages Project enabled the department to secure a staff development grant from the Japan Foundation for more than $91,000. With this funding, a second full-time professor of Japanese language joined the department. Other initiatives of the Asian Languages Project continue in good health, even though we are now well beyond the funding cycle of Title II. The Asian Languages Advisory Group meets three times a year, and Japanese Day has become an annual campus event. The University continues to support professional development in this area by bringing guest speakers and professors to campus. The pilot program for Japanese in the elementary school is expanding as quickly as we can staff the requests for student interns. But what assures the longevity of the program is a major gift of more than a million dollars to Pacific University from the Matsushita Electric Corporation to fund the Pacific Intercultural Institute (PII). We in the Asian Languages Project do not take credit for making this gift happen. What we do feel we contributed is solid programmatic development in the area of Asian Studies, which made the institution more attractive to the Matsushita Electric Corporation.

In the spring of 1990, our first graduate will receive her certification. When we talk with public school superintendents and principals, they uniformly express enthusiasm for what we have brought about in creating Oregon's first certificate program. What has been most rewarding for us personally is the close working relationship developed with colleagues in the public schools. Our dealings with the community have also benefitted us enormously. The cultural wealth of Japan is all around us. If one cannot go to Japan to study Japanese language and culture, surely the next best place in the world to do it must be Portland, Oregon. Collaboration in the creation of Oregon's first endorsement for teachers of Japanese has produced a program fashioned with care, with content, and with generosity of spirit by three groups: the faculty of Pacific University, the high school teachers and administrators of the greater Portland area, and many members of the Japanese community living in Oregon.

1. "Japanese language Enrollments in Oregon's Public Schools, Fall 1988," David Arlington, Oregon Department of Education, 1988.

2. Kenneth A. Sirotnik and John Goodlad, School-University Partnerships in Action (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1988), pp. 3-31.

3. Hiroko Quackenbush and Mieko Ohso, Hiragana in 48 minutes - students set (Distributed by the Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra, Australia).

4. Kazuko Ikeda, Japanese in the Elementary Schools: A Curriculum Guide for Grades 4, 5, and 6 (Forest Grove: Pacific University, 1988).